



When people talk about **"traffic calming,"** they are usually referring to speed humps, traffic circles, pavement narrowings, or other physical modifications of the roadway that are meant to reduce vehicle speeds and discourage "cut-through" traffic. In recent years, many communities have installed traffic calming measures on residential streets - but not all have been happy with the results. Before jumping on the traffic calming bandwagon, we encourage communities to think carefully about the effects of installing traffic calming measures, and to try other means of reducing speeds, such as education and enforcement, that are less expensive and less permanent than physical traffic calming measures.

The intent of this brochure is to provide a brief introduction to the new report, **"Neighborhood Traffic Management in DuPage County, Illinois,"** released by the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference in August 2004.

The **DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference** is also working to compile a database of traffic calming measures used in northeastern Illinois - with detailed descriptions, local contacts, and technical assessments of how well they have worked. Please visit [www.dmmc-cog.org](http://www.dmmc-cog.org) for updated information.



This brochure was created by the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference, a council of 35 municipal governments in DuPage County, Illinois.

1220 Oak Brook Road, Oak Brook, Illinois 60523  
630.571.0480; FAX 630.571.0484  
[www.dmmc-cog.org](http://www.dmmc-cog.org)

© 2004 DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference



**TRAFFIC CALMING**

**DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE ?**



## CAN TRAFFIC CALMING END SPEEDING IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD?



The short answer: *maybe*. Some communities in north-eastern Illinois have installed traffic calming features designed to slow traffic, such as speed humps or traffic circles, and are pleased with the results. In others, however, traffic calming features were installed in response to a few vocal residents, when in fact most residents neither concurred that a serious problem existed nor liked the measures implemented.

Traffic calming measures can sometimes be unpopular with police, fire, and public works departments, as they can slow emergency vehicle response and damage snowplows and other equipment.

There have been few efforts to statistically quantify the effect of a traffic calming measure on speeding - before-and-after studies for traffic calming are rare in northeastern Illinois. In cases where statistical before-and-after studies have been carried out, results have not always shown that speeds have been reduced. In many cases, contradictory results, such as increases in average speeds, have been noted.

### WHAT ABOUT STOP SIGNS AND SPEED LIMIT REDUCTIONS? WILL THEY END SPEEDING?

To put it simply, *no*. Local and national studies have shown that



installing stop signs has no effect on overall speeds, as drivers often speed up between stop signs to "make up for lost time." Similarly, many studies have shown that most motorists drive at a speed that they consider safe and reasonable - so lowering speed limits, without increasing police enforcement, will have little effect on speeding.



### WHAT ABOUT SPEED LIMIT ENFORCEMENT? CAN THIS BE INCREASED?

*Selective enforcement* continues to be an effective strategy for improving speed limit compliance - but only if performed frequently, at specific "problem" locations. Few police departments have the resources to monitor speeds in all "problem" locations or to respond to all citizen requests. Many local departments now routinely use speed display equipment to give approaching drivers immediate feedback on their speed. Although national studies show a positive impact on speed reduction, the greatest effect is obtained when these speed display devices are supplemented with occasional police presence.

Use of photo-enforcement is growing in northeastern Illinois, and applications such as grade-crossing gate violations, red-light running, and toll collection violations are underway. Additional applications may be feasible but photo-enforcement can be expensive and often has a "Big Brother" stigma associated with it.

## THE "4-E" PROCESS A REASONABLE APPROACH TO NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Overall, it seems that there is not a "silver bullet" (traffic calming, stop signs, or increased enforcement) that will end speeding problems in all situations. Instead, we recommend the "4-E" Process, a balanced approach made up of four steps:

- 1. Education.** In this phase, studies that quantify the severity of the speeding problem should be conducted. Also, more active resident involvement could occur, such as "speed watch" programs or other ways to educate residents about the real nature of the perceived speeding problem.
- 2. Expectations.** Community officials and neighborhood residents must be given realistic expectations of the effects of traffic management measures.
- 3. Enforcement.** If a real neighborhood traffic problem exists, a stepped-up enforcement effort in "problem" locations can be implemented.
- 4. Engineering.** If speeding problems continue even after a period of enhanced enforcement, an engineering solution - that is, a traffic calming measure that physically modifies the roadway - may in fact be needed. It is important at this stage to ensure that the majority of neighborhood residents do favor the installation of a traffic calming measure, and that the measure that is installed is appropriate to the situation.